

Pteranodontidae

The **Pteranodontidae** are a family of large pterosaurs of the Cretaceous Period of North America and Africa. The family was named in 1876 by Othniel Charles Marsh. Pteranodontids had a distinctive, elongated crest jutting from the rear of the head (most famously seen in *Pteranodon* itself). The spectacularly-crested *Nyctosaurus* is sometimes included in this family, though usually placed in its own family, the Nyctosauridae (Nicholson & Lydekker, 1889).

Modern researchers differ in their use of the concept. S. Christopher Bennett and Alexander Kellner have concluded that *Nyctosaurus* was not a pteranodontid. In 1994 Bennett defined a clade Pteranodontidae, also including species of the Anhangueridae.^[1] However, this definition has not been accepted by other workers. Alexander Kellner, for example, named several additional species for specimens previously classified as *Pteranodon*, and placed *P. sternbergi* in a distinct genus, *Geosternbergia*. Kellner re-defined Pteranodontidae as the most recent common ancestor of *Pteranodon longiceps*, *Geosternbergia sternbergi* and *Dawndraco kanzai*, and all of its descendants. This definition is now contentious, however, as the validity of *Dawndraco* has been disputed and the utility of separating *Geosternbergia* from *Pteranodon* questioned.^[2] This clade possibly includes the nyctosaurids. Analyses by David Unwin did indicate a close relationship between *Pteranodon* and *Nyctosaurus*, and he used the name Pteranodontia for the clade containing both.

Pteranodontids are primarily known from the Coniacian to Campanian stages of the Cretaceous in North America and Japan.^[3] However, potential Maastrichtian remains have been identified from several other locations,^{[4][5]} being actually rather common in the Maastrichtian of the Tethys Sea. Beginning in 2016, Nicholas Longrich, David Martill, and Brian Andres presented evidence of several nyctosaurid and pteranodontid species from the latest Maastrichtian age of north Africa, suggesting that both lineages went through an evolutionary radiation in the Tethys region shortly before the K–Pg extinction event.^{[6][7][8]} Additionally, later phylogenetic studies imply that they represent a ghost lineage dating much earlier in the Cretaceous.^[9]

References

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Pteranodontids												
Temporal range: Late Cretaceous, 88–66 Ma												
PreЄ	Є	O	S	D	C	P	T	J	K	PgN		
												
Mounted replicas of female and male <i>Geosternbergia sternbergi</i> skeletons (Royal Ontario Museum).												
Scientific classification												
Kingdom:	Animalia											
Phylum:	Chordata											
Order:	†Pterosauria											
Suborder:	†Pterodactyloidea											
Clade:	†Pteranodontoidea											
Clade:	†Pteranodontia											
Family:	†Pteranodontidae											
	Marsh, 1876											
Type species												
† <i>Pteranodon longiceps</i>												
Marsh, 1876												
Genera												
<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">■ †<i>Dawndraco</i>■ †<i>Geosternbergia</i>■ †<i>Pteranodon</i>■ †<i>Tethyraco</i></div>												

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